

# TOURISM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE



Issue 8 – September 2014

## A Focus on the Youth Workforce

O TEC has had a long history of focusing on projects working with Canadian Youth. In fact, O TEC's well-known Ready-to-Work program model began as a youth training initiative called Tourism Careers for Youth. From 2000-2004, over 758 young Ontarians graduated from this program, of which 83% found employment and 79% retained it. Operating in every corner of the province, with a wide range of partners from community colleges to small community associations, this program laid the foundations for O TEC's long tradition of pan-provincial youth collaboration projects that continues today.



Over the years, however, funding priorities have shifted and youth workforce programming has declined, leaving Ontario's youth increasingly vulnerable to unemployment. At the same time, the popularization of "Gen Y and Millennial" stereotypes has added to the issue, making it even harder for young people to get started in the workplace.

Identifying this gap, the Federal and Provincial governments have launched ambitious new strategies to support youth employment. The Federal government's Youth Employment Strategy includes a mix of Skills Link, Career Focus, and Summer

O TEC is committed to supporting employers and youth to ensure this important labour market meets the needs of Ontario's growing economy.

Work Experience programming, while Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, provides a complementary portfolio of Youth Skills Connections pre-employment training and Youth Employment Fund opportunities for employers to recruit and train young candidates at the point-of-hire. O TEC too, has expanded its programming for the market, with a range of new partners and program models focused on youth training following in the tradition of Ready-to-Work. Our curriculum has evolved as well, with our core employment foundations program Workplace Essentials, being adapted to a variety of sectors including healthcare, mining, camp services, retail, forestry and general labour.

## President's Message

It is not unusual that organizations come full circle based on economic or social trends. I have been fortunate to have led the OTEC team for over 8 years, during which time we have adapted to the various priorities of industry and key stakeholders. OTEC began building its legacy of serving youth in 2000 with the Ready-to-Work pre-employment program. When government changed focus towards a new internationally trained market, OTEC developed a successful model for training and supporting them in gaining employment. Now the focus is again on youth and the barriers they are facing.

OTEC has always supported youth through summer employment, internships, and by hiring new graduates. As someone who relishes the role of mentor, and has coached many young people starting their careers, I am particularly gratified when years later these individuals credit their success to the mentorship they received. I entered the industry as a youth during university and upon graduation began an amazing career that allowed me to experience various facets of this sector. I believe that it is my role as a leader to share what I have learned and help future generations.

As demographics shift over the coming years, this sector will experience labour shortages. I challenge all leaders to focus on ensuring youth are attracted to our sector, provided with skills training, and mentored to grow their careers. They are the future

and we need them engaged to ensure the sector continues to be innovative, vibrant and will thrive in this global economy.

*Victoria L. Behune*

Victoria Behune  
President & CEO



## A Youth Perspective – from inside OTEC



Paula Lanza

The creation of the Youth Employment Fund (YEF) is in my opinion a great benefit to both candidates and employers.

Youth unemployment has become a major issue with many young Canadians graduating unable to find work. Ontario's employment climate is among the worst with 16.5% of youth being un- or under-employed. Despite advanced post-secondary education, students are graduating with a lack of skills and qualifications needed to fill the positions available.

Last year, upon graduation, I entered this challenging climate. I thought I had a competitive advantage, having completed 4 co-op work terms, lived and travelled abroad, achieved a

high academic standing and acquired over 2.5 years of professional work experience in the process. Despite these factors my history and experiences did not qualify me for the positions relevant to my career path. In many cases I had certain skills but not others, or lacked the 3-5 years of experience required for an entry-level position. The creation of the Youth Employment Fund (YEF) is in my opinion a great benefit to both candidates and employers. I was hired at OTEC as a Marketing and Communications Coordinator and with the support of OTEC and YEF in my first 6 months I enrolled in a number of college and OTEC courses to develop my skills and abilities. The resources and ongoing coaching and mentorship I've received have allowed me to advance technically and professionally. With these supports I know I can continue to successfully grow and develop in my career.

# Workforce Strategy

## Tourism Northern Ontario (TNO) – Workforce & Industry Training Strategy

With a market the size of Northern Ontario, one has to be strategic to pull together assets and stakeholders and lead in achieving a common goal. Taking this approach Tourism Northern Ontario (TNO) successfully developed the “go-forward” model for the 4 pillars of their regional tourism development strategy.

Assembling independent industry and stakeholder committees for each of their Marketing, Product Development, Investment Attraction, and Workforce Development pillars, TNO began the process of building a series of strategic plans that would evolve in concert. By taking the time to consult with expert sources throughout the planning process TNO ensured that their pillars did not become stifling “silos”.

In August 2014, TNO announced the release of the latest of these strategies, the Regional Tourism Workforce & Training Strategy. As a committee member, OTEC was impressed at TNO’s ability to secure the buy-in, participation, and feedback of industry, education, community development and association stakeholders from all three sub-regions. This work identified many core skill gaps and training requirements of the tourism industry, as well as strengths, partners, and resources to be leveraged. One of the strategic recommendations, a regionally targeted customer service training campaign, was immediately launched from June to July 2014, showing a commitment to act on their findings.

TNO’s full Workforce Strategy can be found at: <http://tourismnorthernontario.com/documents>




### Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) – UPSKILL: Essentials to Excel

Led by SRDC and funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, the pan-Canadian UPSKILL project was launched in 2010 to measure the impacts of workplace literacy and essential skills (LES) training. Over 100 firms and nearly 1,500 workers in the Accommodations sector were enrolled across the country. In Ontario, the project was implemented in partnership with OTEC who project managed industry engagement, training delivery, data collection, and provincial industry performance assessments. Results indicate this new training model has a large positive impact on both an organizations’ return on investment and workers’ skills and job performance, especially under the conditions planned for by the Canada Jobs Grant.

**Expect more to come as OTEC applies these findings to help its partners improve their pre-employment, training and onboarding models.**

# Industry Training: New Programs



“Leaders who have the best coaching skills have better business results.”

- VP of Global Executive and Organizational Development at IBM

## Coaching for Excellence

**NEW!**

Coaching for Excellence, OTEC’s newly streamlined, updated, and re-launched management-level workshop, provides managers and supervisors with the tools and best practices needed for coaching their employees to achieve optimal outcomes within their organization. This full-day workshop explores the significance of coaching for performance, the major obstacles managers face when coaching, and how being an effective workplace coach can benefit a team and an organization. Participants discover how to apply established coaching processes to a variety of real world situations, including those from their own workplace, and acquire feedback to further develop an understanding and a set of skills. The workshop content stimulates all types of learners through the use of multimedia, interactive activities, and the sharing of ideas and best practices.

## Overcoming Difficult Service Situations

**NEW!**

Time and time again, front-line service providers tell us that one of the most challenging components of being a service professional is resolving difficult customer situations successfully, and consistently. Overcoming Difficult Service Situations, OTEC’s newest interactive, multimedia workshop provides front-line service professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to assist them in ensuring their customers and clients walk away happy, every single time.

During this half-day workshop, service professionals discover what makes service situations challenging, identify what factors are in their control, and explore the 3 customer categories and how to best resolve their concerns. Moreover participants are provided with the opportunity to apply proven service recovery processes to a variety of workplace situations, and practice strategies for how to say “no” to a customer when necessary, successfully turning a negative situation into a positive outcome and increasing customer loyalty.

# Community & Education Partnerships

## International Language Academy of Canada (ILAC)



Over the past year, OTEC has been working with ILAC to help build corporate service strategy and course curriculum for ILAC's new School of Service Excellence. This past spring the school launched their flagship Service Excellence for Business diploma program; a 24-week education program for international students imparting essential service skills using proven material from OTEC programs including Customer Service Skills and Canadian Workplace Essentials while cross-training in various *emerit* hospitality and tourism occupational programs.

## Seven Generations Education Institute

In fall 2013 OTEC began collaborating with the Seven Generations Education Institute in Kenora and Fort Frances to address the need for career training to prepare individuals for the growing mining industry in Northern Ontario. OTEC developed a new Hospitality Skills for Camp Services program comprised of two streams; a 6-week program providing essential employability skills with an introduction to careers in mining camp services, as well as three 5-week programs specializing in one of remote housekeeping, remote line cook, and food and beverage server. To date, 46 students have participated in the foundational skills training, and the Remote Line Cook and Food and Beverage Server programs launched in July 2014.



## Humber College

This year Humber College integrated the *emerit* Event Coordinator (EVC) Certification as part of their diploma program. Students successful in writing the *emerit* EVC Certification Exam and who had also met the requirement of 1,500 hours of experience in their field, graduated from Humber's Event Planning program as a Tourism Certified Professional with the EVC industry credential. *emerit* certified Event Coordinators are recognized industry-wide as having a comprehensive understanding of the skills and knowledge required to perform their job and meet nationally recognized occupational standards for their profession. Preparing its students to achieve the EVC certification is another way Humber is developing highly regarded graduates from its Event Planning program.



## Brampton Multicultural Centre (BMC)



Recently OTEC partnered with BMC to deliver retail-specific employment and life skills training to at-risk youth in the Peel region. The innovative Youth Pathways Program, funded in part by the Government of Ontario through the Youth Skills Connections fund, includes OTEC's flagship Service Excellence training as well as customized retail specific employability skills training based on *emerit* Workplace Essentials. The combination of these curricula has resulted in a unique program that develops the participants' employment and life skills with a retail specific focus and provides real-world experience through a 16-week work placement.

## Great Spirit Circle Trail & Aboriginal Experiences



This spring, OTEC partnered with Aboriginal Experiences and Great Spirit Circle Trail to help provide heritage and culture professionals in Northern Ontario with a unique 5-day professional development opportunity. Based on the *emerit* Heritage Interpreter curriculum and facilitated by an Aboriginal Experiences' Trainer, the training provided an opportunity for participants to hone communication skills and develop new programs to engage returning guests year after year. To further endorse participants as Canadian Tourism professionals, the 5-day program incorporated the nationally recognized certification exam for *emerit* Heritage Interpreter Professional Certification.

# Industry & Partner Update

## Direction Ontario

In early 2014, OTEC worked with the Direction Ontario Francophone Tourism Organization to develop an online education program aimed at increasing the ability for Ontario's Tourism and Hospitality Industry to attract, and effectively serve, Francophone visitors. *The Bienvenue en Ontario – Engaging the Francophone Visitor* certificate program is a series of 3 online webinars with accompanying toolkits available online via a micro-site. For more information about the program please visit [www.directionontario.com](http://www.directionontario.com).

## Niagara Parks Commission (NPC)

Niagara Parks welcomes over 6 million visitors each year at their attractions, golf courses, restaurants, historical sites, gardens and trails. To help better serve this volume of diverse visitors, OTEC worked with NPC to design, develop and deliver service standards and an accompanying training program to inspire their over 1700 employees to provide consistent and excellent service to every visitor, every day, everywhere in the Park.

## Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

Over the past several years, OTEC has worked with TIAO to develop and facilitate a series of webinars, in English and French, aimed at enabling Ontario's tourism and hospitality businesses to better serve guests with disabilities and to become compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act's (AODA) customer service standard, employment standard and the information and communications standard. Webinars are available 24/7 and can be accessed at [www.tiaontario.ca/accessibletourism](http://www.tiaontario.ca/accessibletourism).

## Niagara Tourism Ambassador Program (RTO 2)

To enhance the skills developed during the widely successful Niagara Ambassador eLearning course, OTEC developed the Leaders Toolkit. Complete with reinforcement activities and learnings, this post-training toolkit equipped Niagara business leaders for the over 1,000 Niagara Ambassador program participants with best practices to continue to enrich and enhance the skills learned throughout the program.

## RTO 11 – Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO)

OTEC continues to work with OHTO and their OHvation program by providing front-line and management level customer service workshops to tourism and hospitality stakeholders throughout the OHTO region. Developed by OTEC, the OHvation program includes training, access to resources, service delivery evaluation tools, and an all-encompassing mystery shop evaluation. OHTO also provides services for those unable to attend scheduled workshops by offering OTEC's new *Service Excellence Dynamics* eLearning course, available online 24/7.

## RTO 13 – Tourism Northern Ontario

To help prepare front-line service teams in Northern Ontario for the 2014 summer tourism season, OTEC developed *Service Excellence Northern Ontario*; a customized customer service course delivered throughout the north in over 11 locations. 100% of participants indicated the workshop would help them provide better customer service and would recommend *Service Excellence Northern Ontario* to their colleagues. Participants also most valued the opportunity to develop the skills to effectively overcome difficult service situations.

## Other RTO Activities

Throughout 2013-14, OTEC also partnered with the Heart of Ontario (RTO3), The Great Waterway (RTO9) and Explorers Edge (RTO 12) to provide regional tourism and hospitality businesses with the opportunity to participate in a range of customer service-related workshops, including Building a Culture of Service Excellence, Service Excellence, Essentials of Service Excellence and Preparing Your Business for International Visitors.

## NEW!

### City of Toronto

OTEC is working with the City of Toronto over the next several months to develop a "Welcome to Toronto – We've Been Expecting You" (WBEY) online engagement and education platform. The platform will build on the award winning instructor-led course OTEC developed for the City of Toronto in 2010, and will also include a module on the upcoming 2015 PanAm/Parapan American Games.



# Service Excellence Dynamics

With so many of our partners in the Service industry, one demand that continually arises is for flexible quality training. Service professionals don't always work the typical 9-5 day, many work shifts or seasonally, and employers often find it extremely difficult to consistently train all team members. We are therefore pleased to report that in April 2014, after a year of development and testing, OTEC launched its very first customer service eLearning course; Service Excellence Dynamics.

Designed with the aim of certifying all time crunched professionals in service excellence and the art of increasing customer loyalty and creating memorable experiences, Service Excellence Dynamics is compact and convenient, taking only 60 minutes to complete. The course includes; videos, matching, sound clips, and Q&A activities; to engage a range of learning styles, and at the end supplies graduates with their own printable certificate. Because the training is hosted online it can be completed by anyone, at any time, from anywhere, at any pace.

Many of our partners have already found this type of easily accessible training a benefit and have incorporated Service Excellence Dynamics into their own training programs.

- Visitor Information Centres include the program as part of summer staff orientations
- Employment Services Centres are providing the training to ensure job seekers are prepared for employment
- Tourism attractions are using the program to ensure staff hired after the main summer orientation have the necessary customer service skills
- Spas train their entire teams to ensure consistent service
- Colleges have incorporated the program as an additional certification in their hospitality courses

"The online training was excellent, professional, and ran quite smoothly. The audio-visuals were a helpful learning tool. I would not hesitate to use this online training again."

– *Employment Consultant,  
Fleming Community Resources  
for Employers & Workers*

**SERV** CE EXCELLENCE  
**D**YNAMICS

# Upcoming Workshops

**Service Excellence  
Designated Trainer Program  
Coaching for Excellence  
Service Excellence & DTP  
Designated Trainer Program**

Tuesday, October 21, 2014  
Tuesday – Thursday, October 21 – 23 2014  
Wednesday, November 12, 2014  
Tuesday, December 2, 2014  
Tuesday – Thursday, December 2 – 4 2014

## What's New!

### Otec Website Launch

In order to meet the growing demand of our partners and stakeholders for immediate, convenient and flexible access to in-depth information and services, Otec has enhanced its online presence. In addition to expanding our training offerings to include Service Excellence Dynamics eLearning, in July 2014 Otec launched our **NEW** dynamic website – [otec.org](http://otec.org).

Designed with the goal of better serving organizations looking to attract, retain, and develop high performing individuals, the NEW Otec website is a rich in content all-in-one resource. Our new site includes useful industry links and connections, engaging success stories, an interactive blog, testimonials, and is a leading source for information and news on customer service, interpersonal and leadership skills, community development programs, and services for a wide range of industry sectors.

Check out how we've improved at [otec.org](http://otec.org) and let us know if our website meets your training and development needs.

## Partner Network



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